

Being in a Multicultural Classroom--- Do's and Don't for Teachers

Do...

1. use the same scientific approach to gain background information on various micro-cultures as you would to tackle a complicated course in science, mathematics, or any subject area in which you might need to improve.
2. engage in systematic study of the disciplines that provide insight in the cultural heritage, political struggle, contributions, and present day problems of minority groups and women.
3. try to develop sincere personal relationships with minorities. You can't teach strangers! Don't give up because one minority person rejects your efforts. All groups have sincere individuals who welcome honest, warm relationships with members of another race. Seek out those who will accept you. This coping skill is one that minorities have always used.
4. recognize that there are often more differences within a group than between two groups.
5. remember that there are many ways to gain insight and understanding about a group: Visit their churches, homes, communities; read widely and listen to various voices within the group.
6. remember that no one approach and no one answer will assist you in meeting the educational needs of all students in a multicultural classroom.
7. choose instructional materials that are accurate and free of sex and race bias.
8. remember that there is a positive relationship between teacher expectation and academic achievement.
9. use a variety of materials and especially those that portray positive, true-to-life experiences.
10. provide an opportunity for minority group boys and girls and children from the mainstream to interact in a positive intellectual and social setting on a continuous basis.
11. provide some structure and direction to children who have unstructured lives, primarily children of the poor.
12. expose all children to a wide variety of literature, art, music as part of your cultural sensitivity program.
13. utilize the rich cultural resources within your own classroom and community.
14. remember that human understanding is a lifetime endeavor.
15. remember to be honest with yourself. If you can't adjust to children from multicultural homes, consider another profession besides teaching.

Don't...

1. rely only on textbooks, teachers' guides, and brief essays to become informed on minorities and women. Additional research and resources will be needed.
2. use ignorance as an excuse for not having any insight into the problems and cultures of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and other minorities, as well as women, the aged and people who are differently abled.
3. rely on the "expert" judgment of one minority person for the answer to all the complicated racial and social problems of his/her people.
4. be fooled by popular slogans and propaganda intended to raise the national consciousness of an oppressed people.
5. get carried away with the "save the world" concept. Most minorities have their own savior.
6. be afraid to learn from those who are more familiar with the mores and cultures than you.
7. assume that you have all the answers for solving the other person's problems.
8. assume that all minority children are culturally deprived.
9. develop a fatalistic attitude about the progress of minority group students.
10. re-segregate pupils through tracking and ability-grouping strategies.
11. give up when minority students seem to dislike school.
12. assume that minorities are the only ones who should have multicultural education. Mainstream students can be culturally deprived in terms of their knowledge and understanding of other people and their own heritage.
13. go around asking parents and children personal questions in the name of research.
14. try to be cool by using the slang of a particular racial group.
15. make students of color feel ashamed of their language, dress, or traditions.